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ABSTRACT

This study sought to update and expand the existing databases relating to the supply and demand of special education leadership personnel through a survey of 55 institutions of higher education (IHEs) having doctoral programs in special education. Results are analyzed in terms of doctoral enrollments for the 1990-91 academic year, specialty areas, faculty searches, faculty needs projections, reasons for new faculty positions, and positions taken by graduates. The survey found that schools participating in the Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (HECSE) were the greatest suppliers of leadership personnel and that their graduates take positions in institutions of higher education more frequently, while non-HECSE graduates tend to take positions in state or local education agencies at a greater rate. There was, however, an increase of non-HECSE doctorates entering IHEs, perhaps because they had two or more areas of specialty and could teach across broader and more areas. Very few new doctorates were unable to find employment within their field of expertise. Special education appears to have a very limited pool of future applicants who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The survey reinforces previous work on the need to re-supply exiting and retiring faculties. (17 references) (JDD)

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Special Education Leadership: Supply and Demand Revisited

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SPECIAL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP: SUPPLY AND DEMAND REVISITED

The supply and demand of leadership (doctoral) personnel in special education and in higher education in general is not in balance. Initial predictions of massive faculty retirements and turnover may have been exaggerated, but a shortage of new faculty members will exist throughout this next decade (Blum, 1990a). In a recent report of the American Council on Education (ACE), 59% of university administrators cited faculty staffing as one of their three top concerns, up 20% from the previous year (El-Khawas,1990). ACE reported that many universities are hiring new doctorates at a level above their standard salary schedules so their searches can result in a successful outcome. In addition, universities are offering more attractive benefit packages as part of their hiring practice.

During 1990, The Chronicle of Higher Education published numerous articles about the rise and fall in the number of faculty retirements (Blum, 1990a), increases in new doctorates (Mooney, 1990a), and increases in applications to doctoral programs (Blum, 1990b). Each article reported the need for reliable information and a common data base on exactly what the supply and demand needs of higher education

are, and whether or not there truly is a shortage of existing faculty.

Some have suggested that higher education supply and demand research is flawed and without adequate controls (Blum, 1991). Judith Jill, director of the Office of Research and Policy Analysis at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), recently warned that such supply and demand research should be interpreted with caution because samples differ greatly and projections may be inaccurate for individual states, college units, and departments (Blum, 1991). As institutions of higher education (IHEs) grapple with the difficulty of reporting across colleges, departments, and specialty areas, special education professionals have held ongoing discussions on questions surrounding supply and demand for this field.

Initial investigations regarding the supply and demand of special education leadership personnel were prompted when federal support for special education leadership training programs was in jeopardy during the Reagan administration. The justification given for proposed cuts in federal support for leadership training grants were based upon unverified reports of an over-supply of available doctoral professionals. The data base now developing however, should provide more accurate assessments of special education supply and demand needs.

For example, one prediction for higher education, in general, is that many faculty members who were trained in the 1950s and 1960s will retire in the 1990s (Mooney, 1990b). This will result in a moderate increase in retirement rates.

Special education retirement rates, however, may well exceed those predicted for the general faculty population. Zabel & White (1988) surveyed 600 IHE faculty members of the teacher education division (TED) of the Council for Exceptional Children. In 1987, at the time of their survey, full professors' average age was 52 years with associates at 45. One year later, Smith, Pierce, and Keyes (1988) reported that comparable groups had aged by two years. It appears that the retirement phenomena may be fast approaching special education and occur during the 1990s.

A recent symposium specifically on the topic of the supply and demand needs of special education leadership personnel was held by George Washington University (Kochar, 1988). The symposium addressed the critical needs and future projections for leadership training in special education. Each of the participants supported the notion that faculty shortages exist in special education (Smith, et al., 1988) and in ancillary support faculty (Shewan, 1988; Sindelar & Taylor, 1988) which is compounded by difficulties in recruiting candidates and retaining junior faculty (Fleischner, Palmer, Schloss, & Reith,

1988). This situation is particularly serious when attempting to recruit individuals from under-represented groups, (Palmer, 1988) and those from rural areas (Schloss, 1988).

Since 1985, the Higher Education Consortium for Special Education (HECSE) has studied the supply and demand needs of special education faculties. (HECSE is a group of about 40 comprehensive universities offering the doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D.) in special education. Membership is limited to those schools that have at least six faculty members and offer a comprehensive special education doctoral program.) The HECSE studies have attempted to measure the current and future staffing needs of special education departments. Each of the HECSE studies has demonstrated a continued need for retaining, if not expanding, federal leadership support of leadership training (Smith, Davis, Cross, & Morsink, 1986; Smith, & Lovett, 1987; Smith, et al., 1988).

Currently, 85 universities offer a doctoral degree in special education. The types and training offered at these programs greatly differ. Programs may offer general special education preparation or specific preparation in a categorical area (e.g., learning disabilities, or mental retardation) or a specialty area (e.g., technology). Some programs differ in the types of disabilities housed in the department of special education. For example, at one IHE the speech pathology or

vocational rehabilitation program may be part of the special education department, while at another IHE special education might not be combined with other programs. It is impossible to categorize HECSE and non-HECSE schools by the types of programs offered; but, in general, HECSE schools offer a broader array of specializations, have larger faculties, a larger special education doctoral student body, and produce more doctoral graduates than non-HECSE schools.

The purpose of this study was to update and expand the existing data bases relating to the supply and demand of special education leadership personnel. In particular, information was sought on the following topics: demographic profiles of students currently enrolled in and recently graduated from special education doctoral programs, the present need for faculty as indicated by searches, and an estimated three-year projection for faculty openings.

METHOD

In August of 1990, a questionnaire was mailed to special education department chairpersons at the 85 IHEs listed in the The National Directory of Special Education Personnel Preparation Programs (1987) as having doctoral programs in special education. The questionnaire was designed to expand the existing data base about the supply and demand of doctoral

level leadership personnel, so questions used in earlier questionnaires were included here as well.

One month after the initial questionnaire was sent to department chairpersons, follow-up letters were sent to those who had not returned the original survey. The total number returned was 55 (26 non-HECSE, 29 HECSE) representing a 65% return rate. One questionnaire was returned stating that a doctoral program was not offered for the years surveyed. There were five questionnaires which had missing or incomplete responses. In these cases, those data supplied were included in the analysis; therefore, totals do not always equal the total number of responses received.

Results

Simple tallies were made and percentages calculated for each item on the questionnaire. In cases of no response the item for that questionnaire was not entered into the data base.

Doctoral enrollments

Department chairpersons were asked to indicate the identify the number of students enrolled in full time and part time doctoral study for the 1990-1991 academic year. These data are presented in Table 1. Of the 977 full and part time doctoral students, the great majority are being trained at HECSE schools (n = 715; 73%). On several questionnaires,

respondents noted that many of the students listed in the part time category, were students at the dissertation stage for a long time. Of particular note are the data on expected graduates in 1990-1991. Of the 977 total student enrollment, only 162 (17%) were expected to graduate. The figure of 17% may demonstrate that there is not, nor will there be, a sudden influx of new doctorates on the market soon.

Insert Table 1 about here

Chairpersons were asked whether the current enrollment figures represent a higher, lower, or equal numbers, as compared to previous academic years. More than 75% of those responding, provided information indicating basically no change in size of student body.

When these numbers were compared to the earlier HECSE survey (Smith, et al. 1988), the number of graduates actually declined. During the 1987-1988 academic year HECSE schools graduated an average of 4.75 persons per school, while for the 1990-1991 academic year 3.72 students per HECSE school were expected to graduate. For non-HECSE schools, a decline of expected graduates was also reported. During the 1987-1988 academic year, non-HECSE schools graduated an average

of 2.29, while in the current survey 2.07 per school were expected to graduate in 1991.

Graduates' ethnicity for the past two years (1988-89; 1989-1990) was also surveyed. These data are presented in Table 2. Clearly, the data show the majority of previous graduates were Anglo. Of those minority candidates graduated, HECSE schools are training more than non-HECSE schools. For both groups, however, minority graduates continue to remain very low.

Insert Table 2 about here

Specialty Areas

Each chairperson was asked to identify in what disability category or content area expected graduates were Concentrating. Because the totals for the specialty areas, and the totals for the expected graduates do not agree, this section should be interpreted with caution. It may be that some students were specializing in more than one disability area or the item on the questionnaire was confusing to the chairperson completing the survey. We believe the former is more plausible because of the responses from the raw data. For example, when asked about dual content areas more than 95

students (59%) were listed as having two or more areas of specialization. For those students with two or more disability areas of concentration, the majority were from non-HECSE schools (72%), with HECSE schools producing 52% of those with two or more content area concentrations.

The content areas of graduating leadership personnel during 1990-91 were categorized by content area, rather than grouped noncategorically by generic clusters (e.g., mild, moderate, or severe). Mental retardation, learning disabilities, and general special education were the most popular content specialties. Special education administration was a common major at both HECSE and non-HECSE schools, while the more specialized area of technology was primarily found at HECSE IHEs.

Faculty searches

In order to determine the types and frequency of faculty openings in Departments of Special Education, respondents were asked to list all those positions searched during the 1989-1990 academic year, and to indicate the rank and reason for the open position.

As shown on Table 3, HECSE schools had more positions open (HECSE = 33, non-HECSE = 22), but a smaller percentage were tenure track positions (HECSE = 25, 78%; non-HECSE = 19

tenure; 86%). Regardless of the IHE type, assistant professorships were the most common openings in 1989-1990.

Insert Table 3 about here

With respect to the reasons for the searches (Table 3), non-HECSE schools appear to have more new positions than HECSE schools. While the greatest number of positions were to fill vacancies during this period, some programs are growing with new positions, a sign of expansion. Faculty at both types of IHEs are retiring at a fairly high rate documenting the need to supply new doctorates for replacement positions.

Chairpersons were also asked to indicate why they did not hire individuals for the positions searched (see Table 3);the reasons for those rejections are listed in Table 4. While large numbers of applicants applied for positions, the number of qualified applicants greatly reduced the size of pools from which faculties can select. Almost one-third of the positions searched for during the 1989-1990 were not filled for reasons listed in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

For both HECSE and non-HECSE IHEs, faculty found the qualification of applicants remarkably stable. Approximately one-third (262) of all applicants (721) were deemed qualified for available positions. This phenomena is further underscored by the continuation of searches. The greatest reason given for not filling positions was the qualifications of the applicant pool. Of the 15 positions not filled, 43% was due to unqualified or unacceptable candidates.

Faculty needs projections

Chairpersons were asked to project the need for faculty for the next three academic years. These data are presented in Table 5. A total of 71 openings are projected for the next three years. HECSE IHEs listed more future openings (n = 42), than non-HECSE IHEs (n=29). More responses were received from HECSE IHEs, but both groups average about one (1) position per school during the upcoming three year period. Of the 55 schools responding, 16 (8 HECSE, 8 non-HECSE) projected no searches.

Insert Table 5 about here

Reasons for new faculty positions

In order to obtain a picture of the trends of supply and demand of faculty, chairpersons were asked to explain the reasons for new faculty positions. Table 6 displays those data.

Insert Table 6 about here

Clearly, the greatest need across all departments is to fill retirements (45%). HECSE schools show an increase each year in faculty retirements. It is unclear from the data if new positions (n = 17) represent a 20% growth or a conversion of non-tenure positions to tenure positions.

Positions taken by graduates

Finally, chairpersons were asked to explain where graduates for two academic years (1988-89; 1989-90) took positions. Table 7 lists the types of positions taken by graduates. Most graduates choose IHEs for their place of work, whether the job be in temporary (non-tenure) positions, research facilities, or IHE administration. A growing number of graduates taking positions in state or local education agencies (SEA/LEA) with increases noted for both groups.

Insert Table 7 about here

Discussion

The results of this survey add to the existing data base relating to leadership training in special education. This survey has some limitations, such as the lack of precision taken in completing the questionnaire, the number of incomplete items, and the lack of a larger return rate. Therefore, conclusions must be made cautiously.

Some conclusions, however, can be drawn from the results of this and previous studies. HECSE schools continue to be the greatest suppliers of leadership personnel, their graduates take positions in IHEs more frequently, while non-HECSE IHE graduates tend to take positions in state or local education agencies at a greater rate.

The survey reinforces previous work on the need to re-supply exiting and retiring faculties. Both HECSE and non-HECSE schools continue to produce new doctorates, but possibly not at the rate needed. Very few new doctorates are unable to find employment within their field of expertise. Whether the particular position they obtained was their preferred position or not is unknown; so in future studies

investigators might want to determine whether the type of position taken and the type of position desired correlate.

The need to expand the data base on special education faculty supply and demand continues, but we suggest that subsequent surveys be uniform by requesting of the same information from year to year so year-to-year trend analyses can be conducted.

This survey sought to determine if new doctorates were able to find employment, and whether existing faculties were satisfied with their applicants for available positions. In one sense doctoral programs may need to readjust training programs to meet the needs of the market. It may be, for example, that the market may have too high or too specialized requirements to find suitable candidates. For example, the data indicated an increase of non-HECSE doctorates entering IHEs. While HECSE graduates had one specialty area, non-HECSE graduates usually had two or more areas of emphasis. It may be that candidates who can teach across broader and more areas might be more desirable to potential employers.

The future need for faculty members is difficult to predict. Across several surveys, it was impossible to accurately predict possible faculty vacancies even three years in advance. If this is the case, supply and demand information will always be tenuous. Therefore, long range planning by

departments and Colleges of Education is imperative to get a better indication of future needs for leadership training.

An interesting finding in this research relates to demographics of students currently enrolled. Of some note, this question was the most frequently unanswered with universities struggling to become more diverse, special education appears to have a very limited pool of future applicants who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Special education has had a commendable history of training leaders in the field. Even before the passage in 1958 of PL 85-926 which funded doctoral fellowships at 15 IHEs, 27 special education (including speech and hearing) doctoral programs were in operation. Over the years, sufficient numbers of doctoral graduates were produced to staff college and university special education programs. But, the picture today is changing. As public schools now offer competitive salaries, lighter work loads, and less number of days worked, it may become more difficult to attract people into doctoral programs. Or, it may become harder to entice graduates to choose careers in higher education.

This study did not address the changing needs of special education and how those will impact on the types of personnel to meet the future needs of the field. Special education is a

dynamic and evolving field. As the dimensions of service delivery expand and develop -- as we have seen with the increase in services to children and their families in the early childhood and transition areas and in technology applications -- the expertise of our combined personnel in the field of special education must also continue to grow and expand. As there is a shortage of service providers, it appears that there also is and will be a shortage of university-based personnel who can train these direct service personnel. The "ripple effect" of an insufficient supply of university trainers could soon impact the number of individuals available for direct service to individuals with handicaps and their families. Clearly, deliberate thought, problem solving, and action need to occur to determine whether an impending personnel crisis is facing the field; and, if so, how it can be avoided.

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Table 1

1990-1991 Doctoral Enrollment Profile

ENROLLMENT	HECSE	NON-HECSE	TOTAL
Full time	334	96	430 (44%)
Part time	381	166	547 (56%)
Total	715 (73%)	262 (27%)	977
Grad in 90-91 (expected)	108	54	162 (17%)

Table 2

Ethnicity of Doctoral Students

	HECSE		NON-HECSE	
	88-89	89-90	88-89	89-90
Anglo	55 (82%)	44 (72%)	18 (64%)	25 (89%)
Black	4	8	0	1
Hispanic	3	1	0	0
Asian	4	8	0	2
Native American	1	0	1	0
Unknown	0	0	9	0
TOTAL	67	61	28	28

Table 3

1989-1990 Summary of Faculty Searches

RANK	HECSE	NON-HECSE	TOTAL
Associate/Full	5	1	6
Assistant/Associate	2	5	7
Assistant	18	16	34
Adjunct Assistant	4	0	4
Open Rank	2	0	2
Unknown	2	0	2
TOTAL SEARCHES	**33**	**22**	**55**
REASON	**HECSE**	**NON-HECSE**	**TOTAL**
New Position	3	9	12 (22%)
Retirement	6	7	13 (23%)
Vacancy	17	6	23 (42%)
Grant Position	5	0	5 (9%)
Minority	1	0	1 (2%)
Department Chair	1	0	1 (2%)
TOTAL	**33**	**22**	**55 (100%)**

Tenure Track	**25**	**19**
No Positions	**8**	**8**

Table 4

Applicant Pool Summary

APPLICANTS	HECSE	NON-HECSE	TOTAL
Total Positions	33	22	55
Total Applicants	365	356	721
Total Qualified	129 (35%)	133 (37%)	
Positions not Filled	9 (27%)	6 (27%)	15 (27%)
Reason not Filled:			
Search Continued	2	3	5
Salary/Cost of Living	2	0	2
Temporary Position	1	0	1
Candidate Declined	1	1	2
Faculty did not Approve	1	0	1
Affirmative Action	1	1	2
Cancelled by Dean	1	0	1
Unknown	0	1	1
TOTAL	8	7	15

Table 5

Faculty Needs

FACULTY NEEDS NON-HECSE					
1990-91		1991-92		1992-93	
Hearing Impaired	2	Learning Disabled/ Behavior Disorders	2	Learning Disabled/ Hearing Impaired	1
Mild Handicaps	1	Field Supervision	2	Mental Retardation	2
Transition	1	ECSE	3	Learning Disabled/ Behavior Disorders	1
Learning Disabilities	1	Mental Retardation	3	Visual Impairment	1
General SPEC	2	Gifted	1		
Integration	1	Voc/Rehab	1		
Mental Retardation	1	Trends	1		
Unknown	2				
TOTAL	11		13		5
FACULTY NEEDS HECSE					
ECSE	6	Visual Impairment	1	ECSE	1
LH/LD	2	Speech	1	Visual Impairment	3
Hearing Impairment	1	Learning Disabilities	5	Mild Disabilities	1
Vocational Education	1	Behavior Disorders	1	Mental Retardation	1
Mild Handicaps	2	Mental Retardation	1	Policy	1
Visual Impairment	2	Bilingual	1	Developmental Handicap	1
Mental Retardation	3	Mild Handicaps	2	Unknown	1
Behavior Disorders	1	Unknown	2		
Gifted	1				
TOTAL	19		14		9
TOTAL FACULTY NEEDS					
	30		27		14

Table 6

Reasons for Faculty Need

	1990-91		1991-92		1992-93		
POSITION	HECSE	NON-HECSE	HECSE	NON-HECSE	HECSE	NON-HECSE	TOTAL
New	2	2	1	7	0	2	14 (20%)
Retirements	4	5	7	4	9	3	32 (45%)
Replacements	11	2	6	0	0	0	19 (27%)
Fill Leave	0	0	0	2	0	0	2 (3%)
Unknown	2	2	0	0	0	0	4 (5%)
TOTAL	19	11	14	13	9	5	71

Table 7 8

Positions Taken by Graduates

POSITION	HECSE		NON-HECSE		TOTALS
	88-89	89-90	88-89	89-90	
IHE	40 (49%)	32 (36%)	4 (18%)	9 (32%)	85 (38%)
IHE-TEMPORARY	13	9	2	2	26 (12%)
IHE-FOREIGN	3	10	0	0	13 (6%)
SEA/LEA	15	23	3	15	56 (25%)
IHE-RESEARCH	3	2	0	0	5 (2%)
IHE-ADMINISTRATION	1	0	2	0	3 (1%)
PRACTICE	2	5	5	0	12 (5%)
NON-PROFIT	2	2	2	1	7 (3%)
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	0	1	0	0	1 (.5%)
UNKNOWN	3	2	0	0	5 (2%)
NO POSITION	0	3	4	1	8 (4%)
TOTAL	82	89	22	28	221